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## ***NEWS RELEASE***

**Date:** September 25, 2015  
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### **OWENS HOMESTEAD FIRE CAUSE UNDETERMINED**

The cause of the fire that destroyed the Owens Homestead early Thursday morning remains undetermined. Branson Fire-Rescue fire investigators returned to the scene Thursday and were unable to determine an origin or cause of the fire.

"There were no utilities to the structure or severe weather prior to the fire as potential accidental causes," stated Fire Chief Ted Martin. City Park's employees have reported trespassing in the home several times as they have worked to keep it secure. "We cannot rule out the possibility that someone trespassed into the home and may have caused the fire," added Martin.

The fire was contained to the home itself, even as it was fully involved in flames when the first calls to the 9-1-1 communications center came in. The Park's Department had been preparing the home and surrounding property for "Pioneer Days" scheduled for early October. The home was going to be open for tours so visitors could see how early pioneers lived off the land in the Ozarks. "Thankfully the Park's employees had cleared a lot of underbrush and small vegetation away from the home and thus reduced the risk for a larger fire in the Lakeside Wilderness Forest Area," stated Martin.

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